

Three Keys to Avoiding Failure When A Change Must Come

Nothing frustrates great leaders more than watching a project crucial to their church's growth and missional effectiveness stall prior to completion. Hours of effort and dreaming often disappear in the span of one congregational meeting.

A misunderstanding of the **Iron Triangle** often leads to progress dying on the vine.

The Iron Triangle is a principle of project management that states this: **there are three, independent, yet inter-dependent objectives in any initiative that, when applied, also become constraints.** An increase in any of the two will necessarily result in a decrease in the other one.

A desire for each of these objectives results in three questions that are asked of every project:

Can it be great? Based on a desire for the highest quality.

Can it be quick? Based on a desire for the promptest delivery.

Can it be cheap? Based on a desire for the lowest cost.

People want all three objectives: a product that is good, fast and cheap.

The Principle of the Iron Triangle states that **you can only ever achieve two of the three objectives at any one time.**

It can be good and fast, but your project will not be very cheap.

It can be fast and cheap, but your project will not be very good.

It can be cheap and good, but your project will not be very fast.

It is not a question of style or experience, but of economy. There are only so many resources available at any one time. **Effective leaders understand this reality and can prioritize the two resources that matter the most, as well as set appropriate expectations for their team.**

The Iron Triangle is highly applicable to leading change in the church as well.

When it comes to leading effective change in the church, you can only have two of those three resources in any initiative:

Positive change that most everyone will receive without hesitation.

Expedient change that is responsive to immediately pressing matters.

Inexpensive change that is not dependent on significant resources.

A positive and expedient change will require higher financial and volunteer resources to realize.

An expedient and inexpensive change will require more significant relational capital, and concessions of personal preference, to realize.

An inexpensive and positive change will require a more extended season and more considerable investment of time to realize.

The Leader's real secret lies in knowing how to set congregational expectations around which resources are being maximized and which will be missing. **Setting appropriate expectations within the Iron Triangle often becomes the difference maker of success when change is required.**

If you are facing a significant change in your church, your first step is to decide which pathway that you desire the most:

1. A change that everyone will like and that can happen quickly.
2. A change that can happen soon and will not cost a lot.
3. A change that will not cost a lot and everyone will be happy about.

Next, based on the pathway above, set everyone's expectations for the resource that will be required:

1. This type of change will take significant financial and volunteer resources.
2. This type of change will bring sideways energy dealing with unhappy people.
3. This type of change will take time to implement and integrate across the body.

Finally, lead confidently knowing that you are pursuing God's better future for your church and the Kingdom. **Always remember that refusing to change is deciding to decline.**

> [Read more from Bryan.](#)
